

RETAIL PRICES - MARCH QUARTER, 1956.

The "C" Series Index Numbers.

Index numbers of retail prices ("C" Series) for the March quarter of 1956 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1956.

City.		Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from March Quarter, 1955.	Increase from December Quarter, 1955.
			%	%	%
Brisbane	..	2,260	161.9	3.0	1.7
Toowoomba	..	2,295	169.7	3.1	1.5
Rockhampton	..	2,296	166.7	2.6	1.5
Townsville	..	2,388	161.8	2.7	1.6
Bundaberg	..	2,250	167.5	2.8	1.5
Warwick	..	2,256	174.5	2.2	1.2

The increase of 1.7 per cent. in the "C" Series index number for Brisbane in the March quarter of 1956, although the biggest quarterly increase for nearly four years (since June quarter of 1952), was not much greater than occasional large increases which have occurred since the rapid post-war rise in prices ceased. In 1953 there were increases of 1.3 and 1.5 per cent. in the September and December quarters respectively, and in 1954 there was an increase of 1.3 per cent. in the December quarter. Moreover, the recent rise was chiefly due to certain seasonal food items (which are always subject to occasional large rises or falls), while the miscellaneous items section rose by only 0.4 per cent. and the clothing and footwear section which has not significantly risen since the middle of 1953 showed a small decrease of 0.3 per cent. Changes in prices in the other five Queensland cities for which the index is available were very similar in magnitude and cause to that for Brisbane. Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases<sup>a</sup>, March Quarter, 1956.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1955.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1955.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1955.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	207.0	3.9	277.3	-0.3	119.3	0.4
Toowoomba	230.8	3.6	276.5	-	116.5	0.1
Rockhampton	199.1	3.4	269.7	-0.1	129.0	0.2
Townsville	195.2	3.6	276.2	-0.1	127.9	0.2
Bundaberg	198.4	3.7	275.6	-0.2	114.0	0.2
Warwick ..	218.3	2.8	279.6	-0.2	122.0	0.2

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Compared with their pre-war level, retail prices have risen less in Brisbane than in any of the other five capital cities. The "C" Series index number for Brisbane for the March quarter of 1956 was 161.0 per cent. higher than in the September quarter of 1939, compared with an average rise of 169.1 per cent. for all six capitals. With an increase of 275.1 per cent., Brisbane had the lowest rise in clothing and footwear prices, Adelaide with 276.2 per cent. being the next lowest, while the average for the six capital cities was 287.9 per cent. In food and grocery prices Brisbane's increase of 207.4 per cent. was a little above Adelaide's 204.1 per cent., but was well below the average for the six capitals of 218.0 per cent.; and for miscellaneous items it was in a similar position with an increase of 118.4 per cent., compared with an average of 122.4 per cent. for the six capitals.

Food and Groceries.

As shown in the preceding table, increases were recorded during the quarter in food and grocery index numbers for the six cities in which data are collected. Substantial increases were recorded in prices of potatoes in all the cities, and increases were also recorded in prices of eggs (all cities), bacon (except Townsville), and pork (except Bundaberg). Tea prices were irregular; the increased prices which in Rockhampton and Townsville affected only two months of December quarter, 1955, operated throughout March quarter, and in Brisbane and Toowoomba new stocks at lower prices were on sale during the last month of the quarter.

Clothing and Miscellaneous.

Small decreases were recorded for five of the six cities in the clothing and footwear index numbers during the quarter, while in Toowoomba there was no change. The miscellaneous items index numbers showed small increases in the six cities.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index increased slightly in Brisbane (0.9 per cent.), Rockhampton (0.4 per cent.), and Townsville (1.1 per cent.), and remained stationary in the other three cities.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in March quarter, 1956, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	3 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1	0	6	1	0	5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	19	11	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	1	0	4 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>
Rockhampton	1	0	3 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1	0	4 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	19	7	7 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	19	11	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1	1	2 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>
Townsville ..	1	1	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	1	1	3 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1	2	0 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1	0	2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	1	1	9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>
Bundaberg ..		19	11	1	0	6		16	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1	0	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1	0	4
Warwick ..		19	11 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	1	0	6		15	5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	1	0	0 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1	1	4

As price movements in the other Queensland cities for which the index is available were very similar to those in Brisbane during the latest quarter, prices in all of them retained approximately the same relationship to Brisbane prices as in the previous quarter. In each city, however, prices became slightly lower in relation to metropolitan prices. The largest decrease in these relative prices (1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. in the £) was recorded in Warwick where retail prices are now lower than in Brisbane, and the smallest (<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. in the £) in Townsville and Bundaberg. Townsville remained the dearest city of those included in the survey and Bundaberg was still the cheapest, the amount required to purchase goods costing £1 in Brisbane being 19s. 11d. in Bundaberg compared with £1 1s. 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. in Townsville.

The relative prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities remained higher than in Brisbane. During March quarter the excess over Brisbane prices decreased by <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. in the £ in Toowoomba, Townsville, and Bundaberg, 1d. in the £ in Rockhampton, and 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. in the £ in Warwick. Of the six cities, Townsville still has the highest food prices, food and groceries there costing 1s. 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. in the £ more than in Brisbane.

During the quarter prices of clothing and footwear in relation to Brisbane increased in the five provincial cities by amounts of up to <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. in the £ in Toowoomba. Clothing and footwear prices are much more uniform throughout the State than prices of commodities in other sections of the index, and in the recent quarter the largest deviation from Brisbane prices was an excess of 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. in the £ in Townsville.

Miscellaneous items are more expensive in all five provincial cities than in Brisbane, although the margins decreased further during March quarter by amounts ranging up to <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. in the £ in Toowoomba.



### Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. An application for resumption is now before the Court.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September and December quarters of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females on each occasion. During the next six quarters, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded four small upward movements and two small downward movements, and the Court made no adjustment in the basic wage until after the publication of the index number for the June quarter of 1955, when an increase of 2s. for males and 1s. 6d. for females was awarded. Similar increases followed the index number for the September quarter of 1955, but no change occurred for the December quarter of 1955. Following publication of the index number for the March quarter of 1956, the Court increased the basic wage by 4s. for males and 3s. for females to operate from 23rd April, 1956.

The New South Wales State Industrial Court suspended quarterly basic wage adjustments after August, 1953, but resumed them in November, 1955. An increase of 1s. per week for adult males from the first pay-period in May, 1956, resulted from the rise in the Sydney index number for the March quarter of 1956. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, automatic adjustments have been continued under special legislation, the increase in the latest quarter being 5s. for adult males. In South Australia, the State basic wage has not been varied from the rate fixed in August, 1953. In Western Australia, no adjustment was made to the basic wage from July, 1953, until August, 1955. Increases were made in August, 1955, and in February and April, 1956. The latest increase was 3s. 5d. for adult males and 2s. 2d. for adult females in Perth. In Tasmania, quarterly basic wage adjustments which had been suspended since August, 1953, were resumed in February, 1956, the increase in the index number for Hobart for the latest quarter amounting to 9s. for males.

### Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

#### Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ( "C" Series ).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	June Quarter, 1953.	Dec. Quarter, 1955.	March Quarter, 1956.	Males. <sup>a</sup>			Males.			Females.			Date of Operation. <sup>b</sup>
				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2,115	2,223	2,260	10	18	0	11	13	0	7	17	0	23. 4. 56
Sydney ..	2,360	2,471	2,490	12	3	0	12	16	0	9	12	0	May, 1956
Melbourne	2,279	2,436	2,481	11	15	0	12	16	0	9	12	0	May, 1956c
Adelaide	2,238	2,386	2,388	11	11	0	11	11	0	8	13	0	Aug., 1953
Perth ..	2,290	2,573	2,605	11	16	0	12	17	1	8	7	1	23. 4. 56
Hobart ..	2,351	2,511	2,598	12	2	0	13	8	0	10	1	0	May, 1956c

a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

c No State wage is actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed until August, 1953. After a period of suspension quarterly adjustments have been resumed following the scale previously used by Commonwealth Court (see above).

S. E. SOLOMON,  
GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN.

BRISBANE.

22nd May, 1956.

Table 1 - The "C" Series Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended March, 1956.	Quarter Ended-				
				March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.	March, 1956.
Brisbane .. ..	863	1,079	2,228	2,195	2,206	2,221	2,223	2,260
Toowoomba .. ..	851	1,092	2,264	2,227	2,247	2,251	2,262	2,295
Rockhampton .. ..	861	1,084	2,267	2,238	2,251	2,259	2,263	2,296
Townsville .. ..	912	1,119	2,349	2,326	2,330	2,325	2,351	2,388
Bundaberg .. ..	841	1,059	2,217	2,188	2,200	2,202	2,216	2,250
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	1,082	2,241	2,209	2,220	2,233	2,237	2,274
Warwick .. ..	822	1,073	2,230	2,207	2,213	2,223	2,229	2,256

Table 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended March, 1956.	Quarter Ended-				
				March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.	March, 1956.
Brisbane .. ..	856	971	2,557	2,502	2,518	2,553	2,530	2,628
Toowoomba .. ..	814	1,010	2,626	2,572	2,599	2,610	2,600	2,693
Rockhampton .. ..	895	1,012	2,613	2,590	2,592	2,593	2,588	2,677
Townsville .. ..	955	1,057	2,724	2,712	2,699	2,691	2,704	2,800
Bundaberg .. ..	903	1,027	2,629	2,606	2,609	2,611	2,600	2,695
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	984	2,579	2,530	2,544	2,570	2,552	2,650
Warwick .. ..	846	1,000	2,638	2,599	2,609	2,631	2,619	2,693

Table 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended March, 1956.	Quarter Ended-				
				March, 1955.	June, 1955.	Sept., 1955.	Dec., 1955.	March, 1956.
Brisbane .. ..	829	1,454	3,139	3,133	3,150	3,143	3,136	3,128
Toowoomba .. ..	829	1,429	3,119	3,086	3,122	3,110	3,121	3,121
Rockhampton .. ..	845	1,477	3,141	3,127	3,163	3,151	3,127	3,124
Townsville .. ..	840	1,457	3,168	3,156	3,182	3,167	3,164	3,160
Bundaberg .. ..	839	1,447	3,142	3,098	3,133	3,128	3,156	3,151
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	831	1,454	3,140	3,130	3,151	3,143	3,137	3,130
Warwick .. ..	825	1,441	3,137	3,137	3,142	3,138	3,137	3,132